



4-28-05  
#604

# AUSTIN DESIGN COMMISSION

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April 27, 2005

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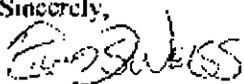
Re: Commercial Design Standards Proposed Code Amendments

Throughout the past year, the Design Commission has been involved with the Commercial Design Standards task force and participated in the Design Standards Code Amendments development process. The Commission has taken the position that the Commercial Design Standards should address the way that a project functions for users and contributes to the overall urban environment, rather than dictate specific guidelines regarding building style, aesthetics, and ornamentation.

We believe that the goals of Design Standards should be to create pedestrian friendly places that promote connectivity, shade, sustainability, preservation of natural character, open spaces, mixed-uses and future adaptability. The Design Commission also believes that these standards can help mitigate problems that have arisen as a result of automobile-dominated design, including large visible parking lots, pole signs, and branded architecture that lessens the unique character that Austin cherishes.

The Design Commission generally supports the Commercial Design Standards Policy Document being presented to Council on 4-28-05, and we believe that the above goals can be realized through implementation of this document. However, given the accelerated schedule under which this document was produced, there are several technical issues and inconsistencies that require further review and clarification. Therefore, the Design Commission recommends a second tier effort by both city staff and the community to review and test the technical language that is created in support of the Commercial Design Standards, prior to final codification.

We appreciate Council member McCracken and City Council's efforts to raise the quality of Design in Austin and would welcome the opportunity to remain involved in the process of review and codification of City of Austin Commercial Design Standards.

Sincerely,  
  
Richard Weiss, Chair  
Austin Design Commission